



Thousands raised for refugees in French port this Xmas >>Page 3

Calais convoy message of hope

Immigration—why giving ground to racism won't win over voters >>Pages 14&15

LABOUR, UKIP AND THE WORKERS



Socialist Worker

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STUFF THE TORIES AND THE FAT CATS

TAKE BACK TRAINS TO STOP RAIL CHAOS



Striker speaks out on privatisation >>Page 4

NHS

Bed overcrowding five times worse than in 2010

THE NUMBER of patients waiting for longer than four hours in A&E for a bed has increased by 500 percent under the Tories, according to BBC analysis.

Around 473,453 people were forced to wait more than four hours for a bed after being admitted into accident and emergency departments.

>>Page 6

STRIKE



The workers taking on Sir Philip Green

WORKERS IN Solihull near Birmingham are facing down the super-rich and super-hated BHS boss Sir Philip Green.

They work for the minimum wage filling orders for his Arcadia Group.

Now they are striking against their poverty pay.

>>Pages 10&11

GREECE

General strike as bosses demand brutal austerity

A GENERAL strike in Greece brought the country to a standstill on Thursday of last week.

The strike came in advance of a meeting of the Greek parliament last Saturday to vote on the conditions of the next bailout.

>>Page 8



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Fuck'

Keira Knightley's 18 month old daughter on hearing of Donald Trump's election

'You've got the Saudis, Iran, everybody puppeteering and playing proxy wars'

Tory foreign secretary Boris Johnson

'They are not the government's views'

A Downing Street spokeswoman responds

'A vital partner'

The spokeswoman on how the government sees Saudi Arabia

'I see more trouble ahead'

David Cameron (remember him) worries about the future

'Low-grade people'

Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage on Ukip members

'People I would never have a drink with'

Nigel Farage again on Ukip members

'The Russians didn't invade Afghanistan'

Aaron Banks, the money behind Ukip, does history



Farepak rip off continues a decade after firm's collapse

TEN YEARS on from the scandalous collapse of Christmas hamper firm Farepak, its victims are still out of pocket.

Some 116,000 people lost a total of £37 million that they had saved up.

Five years ago they had been told they would receive just 15p for every pound saved—and it had yet to be refunded.

The Farepak Victims Committee said the average person lost £400.

Since then the amount victims should receive rose to £32 out of every £100 saved—still a disgraceful amount. But even that hasn't been paid out.

The government's insolvency service has £1.1 million earmarked for former Farepak savers. It's estimated that 11,163 people have yet

to claim. The numbers are unchanged since November last year.

Campaigners say that because legal proceedings took so long, many people gave up. Others may have moved house or died.

Louise McDaid is chair of the Farepak Victims Committee. "They have a

list of names," she said. "Why don't they publish it so at least people can check whether they're on it?"

But officials and bosses have never rushed to help the victims of Farepak.

Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) financed Farepak's parent company European Home Retail.

ASSISTANT CHIEF Constable Darren Best said the presence of armed cops (pictured) in Newcastle acts as a deterrent to criminals, including shoplifters and pickpockets.

"Our armed officers are there to reassure members of the public that we are in a position to respond to any incident that does occur," he added.

Reassuring.



Newcastle community policing



A PROTEST by Farepak victims and Socialist Worker in 2006

It snatched £28 million from the firm before it went bust—then put just £2 million into a fund for the victims.

Sir Clive Thompson was chair of European Home Retail.

As low-paid workers found out that Farepak had collapsed, he was on holiday in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Louise said, "We've still got big supermarkets running the same sort of schemes without protections in place."

Not only have Farepak victims been denied justice, but bosses remain free to trash more low-paid workers' lives today.

Tory brings relief for game in Somerset

BRIDGWATER and West Somerset MP Ian Liddell-Grainger has voiced his dismay at having to miss out on the shooting this winter.

The MP, a descendant of Queen Victoria, has had to hand in his weapons after forgetting to renew his firearms licence. Liddell-Grainger accused Avon and Somerset police of "utter incompetence" after being told it will take no less than 16 weeks to issue a new one.

Not to leap to the plods' defence, but the incompetence is surely Liddell-Grainger's.

Ian Liddell-Grainger

FIGURE IT OUT

0.9 percent of local authorities' public health budgets spent on mental health in 2015/16

1.4 percent of local authorities' public health budgets spent on mental health in 2013/14

0.4 percent of east Midlands health budget spent on mental health in 2015/16.

Be upstanding for the national anthem

A POLICE Chief Inspector shared "explicitly racist" Facebook posts and liked groups calling for Islam to be banned.

Steven Drew of Avon and Somerset Constabulary shared posts telling people who don't stand for the national anthem to "go back to the country you came from".

Drew also liked a page for Nazis Britain First.

He said he is "really against people who can't stand for the national anthem".

Drew admitted to the panel he held some prejudices. Surprisingly

he was sacked.

THE TIMES reported how Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg told a Freedom Association quiz, "I hate having to stand to attention for God Save the Queen while in the bath."

Except they ran the story the day before the quiz took place.

Which means the comedy toff is leaking his bad jokes.

Please don't let the royals be common

ROYAL scrounger Prince Andrew is demanding more.

His daughters Beatrice and Eugenie have the HRH title as they are children of a son of the queen.

Andrew wants the queen to change the

rules so their husbands can be given earldoms.

One source explained the terrifying future if the queen refuses, "His daughters' children will be commoners, defined as one of the ordinary or common people."

Rees Mogg

Foetuses sue woman in US court case

A COURT case in the US has laid bare the reality of the anti-abortion, so-called "pro-life" lobby.

TV actor Sofia Vergara is being sued by two fertilised eggs.

The embryos, "named" Emma and Isabella, are plaintiffs in the case and are apparently demanding the "right to live".

The actual living person bringing the case is Vergara's ex partner Nick Loeb.

The two agreed when creating the embryos that they would only be brought to term if both agreed.

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Convoy to Calais delivers much-needed solidarity

by NAIMA OMAR and CHANELLE FIELD

A CONVOY of over 100 students and trade unionists travelled to Calais last Saturday to deliver solidarity and over £10,000 to the Care4Calais charity.

The French port town itself is a stark reminder of the results of austerity. People are being told to blame migrants and refugees rather than the French and British governments.

The Nazi Front National has used the toxic climate to whip up support and have held demonstrations through the town.

Following the French state's brutal clearance of the "jungle" camp in October, the few refugees who are left are scattered across the area.

That means charity workers find it hard to distribute food, clothing and medicine.

"People might think the problem has gone away," said Mark Redfern from Kingston University in London.

"But the convoy to Calais showed me that the problem is so much more complex than just tearing down a couple of tents."

The delegation shone a light on conditions faced by refugees.

Closing

The convoy was held as the Tories announced they are closing the door on child refugees coming to Britain —after allowing in just 750.

The charity Safe Passage provides legal advice and support to refugee children.

It issued a statement in response to the move, saying that there are still hundreds of children in France that have the legal right to come to Britain.

Figures from the European Commission show that only around 8,000 refugees have been relocated from Greece and Italy to other parts of Europe. That's far below the



TRADE UNIONISTS and student activists deliver solidarity and money to volunteers at the Care4Calais distribution centre

PICTURES: CHANELLE FIELD



160,000 target the EU set itself.

Tariq Shinwari from Afghanistan spoke to Socialist Worker in Calais about his journey. "When you cross the border into Iran and Turkey, they will shoot you and kill you," he said.

Tariq described how he reached Europe. "I came by sea, by boat. It was hard but I didn't have a choice. It just had a space for ten people but there was 50 of us," he said.

One Sudanese refugee spoke to Socialist Worker, also describing how he made the deadly journey across the Mediterranean because he had no choice.

Medical student Ayo Olatunji from UCL in London was on the convoy. He told Socialist Worker, "I met a refugee today who wants to study medicine like me.

"Because of where he was born and our situations I can study and he can't. That's something I find completely unfair.

"I feel society is really losing its

humanity due to capitalism and I think we need to regain control."

Before people left, Care4Calais volunteers briefed them on the situation and what can be done back in Britain.

We need to continue raising political demands on campus, in trade unions and workplaces as the way to fight back against the racist policies of the British state.

We need solidarity but we also need to build Stand Up To Racism to put pressure on both the British and French governments to do more.

 **What's your story?**
Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

SOCIALIST WORKER APPEAL TO RAISE £125,000

Seasons greetings from the Socialist Worker Appeal team! We have now raised £110,165. Thanks to everyone who has donated so far.

Several readers have also organised fundraising socials recently. Please let us know if you've got one planned.

We were pleased to receive a letter this week from a subscriber in Swansea.

He wrote: "I'm enclosing £10 for the Socialist Worker Appeal. Just had my arrears of benefits after successfully winning my appeal against a work capability assessment.

"During months with no regular income my weekly subscription copy of Socialist Worker was a positive highlight to look forward to each week.

"Keep up the good work in 2017 to inspire comrades everywhere to fight back."

To donate go to www.socialistworker.co.uk/appeal

Call 020 7840 5620 or send a cheque, payable to 'SW Appeal' to PO Box 71327, London SE11 9BW



Building SUTR on campus

STUDENTS SPOKE to Socialist Worker about building Stand Up To Racism on campus and how they built the convoy.

In Sheffield, students and Stand Up To Racism activists raised over £2,000 to take to Calais.

Ciretta Paone-Hoyland from Sheffield Hallam University told Socialist Worker, "The Sheffield delegation collected £200 to cover the cost of the coach and £220 on stalls, selling home-made Christmas cards as well as SUTR badges.

"£780 was donated online through the Just Giving fundraising page and from personal donations.

"A further £1,000 was raised at the SUTR community meal, which was organised with the Heeley Asian Women's Group and had a fantastic turnout."

Building

Daire Caminskey, one of seven students from Manchester on the convoy said, "We gave out donation boxes for people to leave in their local workplace, mosque, or church.

"We also raised funds outside Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester."

At Queen Mary University in east London students have passed a motion committing the student council to build Stand Up To Racism.

"The student union is keen to begin work to build for the 18 March national demonstration and get a Queen Mary Stand Up To Racism bloc," Nadia Sayed told Socialist Worker.

DIARY DATES

Here are key dates for the anti-racist struggle in 2017

- Friday 20 January Protests across Britain as Donald Trump is inaugurated US president
- Saturday 4 February Stand Up To Racism trade union conference
- Saturday 18 March National demonstrations in London and Glasgow against racism

For full details go to standuptoracism.org.uk



Solid Southern drivers' strike shuts down routes into London

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

A POWERFUL train drivers' strike shut the Southern rail network on Tuesday as the Aslef union members began a two-day walkout. They planned another 24-hour strike this Friday.

Normally busy railway stations were deserted. At Victoria, one of London's main commuter stations, more than half the departure boards on the main concourse displayed no journey information.

"Please don't travel," was Southern's plea to its 300,000 passengers.

That was the advice even if the company had been successful in its bid to get the strikes banned under Tory anti-union laws. This is because of an ongoing drivers' overtime ban that's exposing how understaffed the network is.

The strike was a solid rejection of Southern parent company Govia Thameslink Railway's plans to extend driver only operation (DOO). Rail unions argue this will undermine safety.

Their "modernising" agenda sees the safety role of the train guard as redundant.

Seconds

They believe they can run 24 new DOO trains an hour through central London, with 1,750 people, and "just 30 seconds to get people on and off".

Workers fear the bosses, or rather the Tory Department for Transport (DfT) that has hired Govia to go to war with rail unions, are "living in toy town".

That is Graham's view, an Aslef member and train driver of over 25 years. He said that "passenger numbers are up 25 percent since DOO has come in and platforms are becoming so overcrowded".

He said that giving drivers sole safety responsibility was inadequate.

"In the drivers' cab we've got screens that are two inches by two

BACK STORY

A train drivers' strike hit Southern rail on Tuesday

- Drivers are in dispute over bosses' plans to get rid of guards on the trains
- Workers point out that this will undermine safety and put passengers at risk
- The attacks have seen several strikes by guards and both groups plan further walkouts
- The Tories are backing the bosses in order to try and break union organisation

inches to look at severely overcrowded platforms," explained Graham.

"If anything we should have more guards on the train because trains are getting longer with over 1,000 passengers on them."

Running

The DfT has at every turn given Govia a helping hand. It is without doubt running the most woeful excuse for a train service in Britain.

When Govia broke the terms of its contract by cancelling too many trains the Tories changed the rules.

When the firm imposed an emergency timetable in the summer that cancelled over 340 trains a day the Tories didn't bat an eyelid.

Graham said the DfT recently tried to run a pilot of 14 trains an hour as part of the development of London Bridge station.

Signallers told transport bosses it was "impossible to run that many trains" but they pressed on regardless. Predictably the plan failed.

The Southern dispute is more than an industrial battle.

The Tories have a political project to keep the gravy train running for private firms.

"The Tories want to privatisate everything and shift the responsibility from themselves," Graham said.

"And it's all done on the back of a fag packet as cheap as possible."

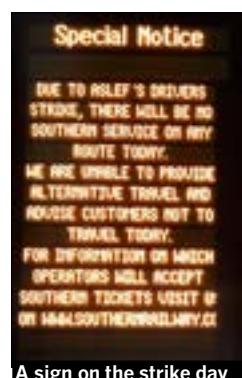
Workers plan more walkouts

INDUSTRIAL action is set to continue into next year on Southern.

Train guards in the RMT union were set to strike again on Monday and Tuesday next week.

They plan to walk out for three days from 31 December to 2 January.

Drivers were also set to strike from 9 to



A sign on the strike day

14 January.

On Thursday passengers were set to hold a protest in Victoria station over constant delays, disruptions and cancellations.

Some have clubbed together to take legal action against the DfT.

Passengers are sick of their MPs blaming workers and want to see more action.



ASLEF UNION members picketing during Tuesday's strike

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

Hated Grayling's privatisation plot

WITHOUT EVEN a hint of irony, Tory transport minister Chris Grayling moaned that the rail strike was a "deliberate act of militancy" that was "entirely politically motivated".

He was sore that two attempts to use anti-union laws to block a democratic 87 percent vote of Aslef members had failed.

And he is under increasing pressure to come out from his bunker and intervene.

Grayling wrote an entirely misleading letter to passengers ahead of the strike.

He said this is "a battle between the unions and the management over whether they will allow new technologies and new ways of working on the railway".

"I wish we were dealing with reasonable people on the union side," Grayling said.

Train driver Graham said Grayling "should drop the 'Right Honourable' before his name as most of the things he says are inaccurate, if not actually lies".

Tory minister Chris Grayling has attacked workers for striking

In fact his department is guilty of everything the top Tory accuses the unions of.

He employs such "reasonable" people as Peter Wilkinson as head of rail franchising and passenger services on at least £265,000 a year to warn of "punch ups" with the unions.

Wilkinson described drivers as "muppets" who need to "get the hell out of my industry".

This pro-privatisation

ideologue is motivated so he and other train bosses can make more money.

Instead, one of Grayling's first acts was to bailout Govia with £20 million and keep blaming the workers for the bosses' mess. He is clear he wants more privatisation.

We need to take the railways back from the fat cats and renationalise to stop the Tories' rail chaos.

IN BRIEF

Hillsborough documentary reveals more lies by state

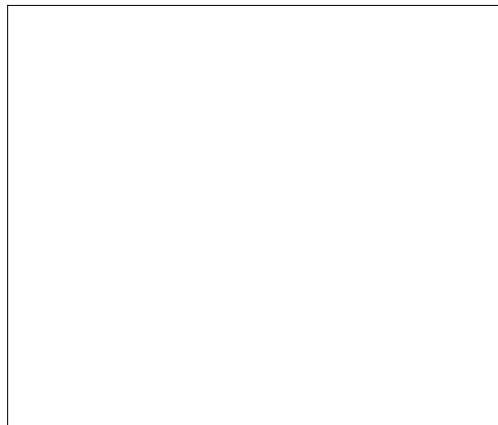
THE REFEREE on duty during the Hillsborough football disaster has said his statement was changed to "give support" to "police actions".

Ray Lewis' statement had referred to fans as "mixed". He told an ITV documentary this week that this was changed to "pissed" and that he didn't see the amended statement for 25 years.

Some 96 Liverpool football fans died as a result of the 1989 disaster. Inquests into the deaths this year found that fans were unlawfully killed.

They also found that hundreds of police statements had been altered.

The ITV programme cast doubt on allegations made



An officer walks past a fan following the disaster

by former Premier League chair Sir David Richards about fans. He claimed fans shouted lewd comments about a woman victim.

But the programme-makers said Richards' description of the woman didn't match any who died.

Another witness,

Cherry Daniels, claimed to have heard the alleged remarks. Her statement did not include the fact that she was the daughter of a South Yorkshire Police officer.

The Sun newspaper published similar smears which have been exposed as lies.

Longer version on socialistworker.co.uk

Cop failings behind deaths of people who leave custody

SOME 400 people killed themselves after leaving police custody over the last seven years, according to a new report.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) attacked the police for being incapable of dealing with complex mental health problems.

In particular, the cops fail to provide adequate support



Cops criticised—again

services for people when they are released from prison. One EHRC

spokesperson said that half the deaths could have been prevented if cops took account of people's mental health.

"There's a lack of accountability and responsibility for these individuals," said Christina Barnes from the EHRC. She said people were "being released without any sort of care or support around them".

Merry Strikemas for Tories

POST OFFICE workers were set to strike for five days from Monday of next week.

The five-day strike is an escalation in the CWU union's fight against office closures, outsourcing and an attack on pensions.

CWU members walked out earlier this year in three separate 24-hour strikes.

With bosses refusing to back down, they are

stepping up their action in the week before Christmas.

CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey attacked the "intransigence" of Post Office bosses "who have launched an unprecedented attack on jobs, job security, and pensions".

Workers are fighting a plan to close some 100 of the main high street post offices and outsource them to companies such as WHSmith.

The sell-offs will mean job losses, with new workers in the replacement offices likely to be employed on worse wages and conditions.

Bosses also want to close workers' defined benefit pension scheme and replace it with a worse defined contribution scheme.

The move means some workers could get thousands of pounds less when they retire.

Socialist Worker

WHAT WE THINK

TORIES SPLIT ON BRUSSELS—SPROUT RESISTANCE

ONE THING will be certain in 2017—the Tories will continue to tear one another apart over Brexit.

This week chancellor Philip Hammond said there was an "emerging view" that Britain might need more than two years to leave the European Union (EU).

This is the period allowed under the EU's Article 50.

This could mean a "transitional deal" that would continue with the present set-up while trade and immigration deals are painfully negotiated.

Meanwhile, Brexit secretary David Davis told a private meeting in the City of London that he was "not really interested" in any such transitional deal.

Theresa May would like a transitional deal that goes on forever. The final agreement will enrage one or other crucial section of the Tory base.

Big business demands that Britain stays in the single market, whose rules enforce a neoliberal straitjacket.

EU leaders have made it clear that to stay in the single market Britain must retain the highly limited free movement of

workers. But many Tory MPs, and a large section of their voters, are obsessed with restricting immigration.

This contradiction will dog the Tories for the next two years and beyond. At some point it could bring down May's government.

But Labour is also divided over Brexit.

Most Labour MPs voted last week to support triggering Article 50 by April 2017.

But 23 Labour MPs voted against because they feared the effect on business.

And on Tuesday, Labour's shadow Brexit secretary Sir Keir Starmer also backed the single market.

As the Tories flounder, we need a clear alternative to racism and business priorities.

We need a Brexit based on extended free movement and a break from the single market and all austerity policies.

The political and economic turmoil that marked 2016 is not going away.

We need to redouble our efforts to build a mass anti-racist movement in Britain and to fight austerity.

In particular we need a stronger defence of the NHS. On 4 March there is a major demonstration to defend the NHS in London.

And every activist should be on the streets of London or Glasgow on 18 March for the Stand Up To Racism demonstrations. They are backed by the TUC and many trade unions.

We need to march against the scapegoating and Islamophobia pumped out by politicians and the press.

A working class divided by racism will be hugely weakened in the battle to beat austerity.

The Tories are split—it's time to seize the chance to beat them back.



Brexit will dog the Tories for the next two years and could even bring May down

FIGHT NAZIS FROM BELOW

THE GOVERNMENT is to ban the fascist group National Action this week. It will be the first fascist group to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation.

Home secretary Amber Rudd rightly said, "National Action is a racist, antisemitic and homophobic organisation which stirs up hatred."

Yet she is part of a government pushing the racism that Nazi groups feed on.

The Tories have continually

whipped up racism against migrants.

They have brought in measures to make it harder for people to come to Britain, and to discriminate against migrants who are here.

They have scapegoated Muslims with their Islamophobic Prevent strategy. All of this helps to create a climate where the Nazis can grow.

A state ban on one group won't stop this. National Action are likely to simply change their

name. And the laws are much more likely to be used against Muslims and the left than against the Nazis.

The majority of proscribed organisations in Britain are Muslim groups. Groups that oppose Israel and support Palestinian rights are also included.

The state is not our friend in the fight against fascism or anything else.

We need mass mobilisations on the streets to push back the fascists—not state bans.

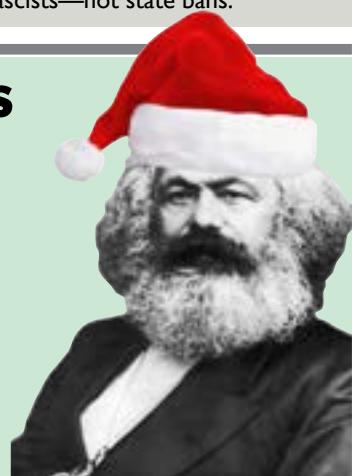
Holiday greetings to our readers

● The next issue of Socialist Worker is due out on Wednesday 4 January 2016

● Until then check our website for reports and updates

● Send news and reports to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

socialistworker.co.uk



ANALYSIS

TOMÁŠ TENGELY-EVANS

Anger at the system rattles ruling class

MARK CARNEY warned last week that politicians had to tackle the growing “isolation and detachment” that working class people feel towards capitalism. The Bank of England governor is just the latest figure in the ruling class to feel the ground shifting beneath his feet.

With a salary of £480,000, plus housing benefits, Carney is hardly motivated by any real concern for working class people. He sits at the top table of global capitalism, which has devastated ordinary people’s lives through endless free market “reforms” and austerity.

But Carney’s speech does point to the unease among his ilk for their global order. “Public support for open markets is under threat,” he warned. “Turning our backs on open markets would be a tragedy, but it is a possibility.”

After more than half a decade of slump, a political crisis means the “discontent and detachment” can erupt in both left and right wing directions.

We saw this in Britain when millions backed leaving the European Union (EU) on 23 June, a popular revolt against the establishment.

For Carney, we’re living through the “first lost decade since the 1860s”. A time of “real wages falling for a decade and the legacy of searing financial crisis weighing on confidence and growth” will sound familiar to many.

But Carney is so at pains to defend capitalism that he can’t acknowledge how deep the problem goes.

He noted that the 1860s was also the time when “Karl Marx was scribbling in the British Library”. Perhaps he ought to have popped in and read those scribbles to help him explain why we have seen a “lost decade”.

For Carney free trade and technological change are the reasons why “globalisation is associated with low wages, insecure work and striking inequalities”.

This puts the free marketeer Carney in a rather uncomfortable position. He’s desperate to defend the market, but is forced to admit how the brutalities of capitalism fuel popular discontent.

The right wing Donald Trump has made hay over the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) destroying jobs.

Mercilessly

Carney said, “The fundamental challenge is that alongside its great benefits every technological revolution mercilessly destroys jobs and livelihoods.”

He then swiftly slaughtered another of capitalism’s sacred cows—free trade.

Since David Ricardo was writing in the 19th century, capitalist economists have maintained that free trade benefits everyone. Now Carney has admitted that free trade “does not raise all boats” and that the “benefits are unequally shared”.

Free trade and technology have had an effect on jobs and wages, but they do not represent the limits of the problems with the system.

Manufacturing jobs in Britain peaked during the First World War, long before neoliberalism.

Capitalists invest in more efficient technology to get ahead of their competitors. By doing this they can increase production and cut the number of workers.

This process of always accumulating more and more is good for the profits of individual firms. But it drags down the “rate of profit” across capitalism as a whole. That’s because profits are created by workers’ labour, not machines.

This gets to the nub of the problem behind Carney’s “lost decade”.

At the end of the 1970s, capitalism ran up against a serious crisis of profitability. Bosses tried to squeeze more and more out of workers with attacks on wages, working conditions and trade union rights to get around it.

That’s why workers suffer falling real wages, job insecurity and rocketing inequality.

That crisis of profitability is also the reason behind the global crash and why capitalism remains mired in slump.

Carney’s speech showed that our rulers know this will continue to fuel the anger against them.

That anger can go to the left or be dragged in a right wing, racist direction.

The left’s challenge is to make sure the anger is used to give Carney and the capitalist system a stuffing.

Hospital bed overcrowding five times worse than 2010

The Tories’ NHS plans are going to make the current ‘bed crisis’ worse

THE NUMBER of patients waiting for longer than four hours in A&E for a bed has increased by 500 percent under the Tories, according to BBC analysis.

Around 473,453 people were forced to wait more than four hours for a bed after being admitted into accident and emergency departments in 2015-16.

The figure stood at 97,559 in 2010-11 when the Tories first got into office.

Those waiting 12 hours or more has also shot up from 72 in 2010-11 to 1,453 in 2015-16.

This dire situation has been caused by the NHS’s beds crisis spiralling out of control.

Plummeted

The number of general hospital beds in England has plummeted by 40,000 in the last 20 years.

There are now just over 100,000.

Britain has 2.7 hospital beds per 1,000 people, the second lowest number in Europe.

This is a serious danger to patient safety and lives.

Only last week sick children were moved long distances because paediatric intensive care units were running at



capacity in London and Leicester. This crisis quickly spread across the whole of England.

This situation will only become worse if the Tories

THE NHS is in crisis because of Tory cuts. The junior doctors’ strikes (left) pointed to a way out PICTURE: PHIL ROWAN

successfully push through their Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STP). This scheme, covering 44 “footprints” of England, would axe hundreds of hospital departments and services across the country.

But the Tories’ plans have also sparked resistance.

Health campaigners were this week set to lobby the Inner North East London health scrutiny committee, which brings together councillors across the local area.

Hammersmith and Fulham and Ealing Labour councils

in west London have already refused to sign off on the plans. This can be a major roadblock to them getting through—more councils need to do the same.

Health Campaigns Together have also called a national demonstration in defence of the NHS for 4 March, which the Unite union has backed. Other unions and the Labour Party should support and build the demo.

Howl of protest for the NHS, Friday 23 December, 12 noon, Whitehall, central London

Cops ‘sexually abusive and corrupt’

OVER 300 police officers and staff in England and Wales are accused of using their position to sexually exploit people, including crime victims.

A new report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary said the abuse was the “most serious” form of corruption in the force.

In the two years to the end of March it found 436 separate allegations of abuse of authority for sexual gain. Some 306 police officers faced accusations.

The inspector who led the review said the problem could be bigger than the figures suggest.

Nearly 40 percent of the allegations involved victims of domestic abuse. Other

Over 300 cops are being investigated

alleged victims included people with addiction problems or who had been arrested.

Less than half of the allegations have been referred to the Independent Police Complaints

Commission. Even home secretary Amber Rudd said the report was “shocking”.

But she is mostly concerned that “public confidence” in the cops could be affected.

Sadie Robinson

Sure Start centre cuts

THE NUMBER of closures of Sure Start children’s centres has increased each year since 2010.

The centres are intended to provide help and information for children of poorer parents before they start school.

None closed six years ago. But 12 closed in 2011, 27 in 2012, 33 in 2013 and 85 in 2014, statistics show.

In 2015 a shocking 156 closed their doors. There are just over 3,200 left.

The government’s austerity project has seen councils, including Labour-run ones, cut or privatised children’s services.

Residents left without food as care crisis grows

Some care home residents face hefty bills as the quality of care gets worse, says **Raymie Kiernan**

TORY PRIME minister Theresa May and her chancellor Philip Hammond are about to heap more misery on working class families with a council tax hike.

They claim this will be used to fund social care. In reality they hope to use the social care crisis to squeeze even more out of workers.

Funding for adult social care has been slashed by a third since 2010 in some local authority areas.

And the number of older people receiving council-funded care dropped by more than a quarter between 2009 and 2013-14.

This has fuelled a deep crisis. The Tories have ignored warning after warning.

But the state of home, residential and nursing care is now so bad even the nasty party feels it has to be seen to act.

Over 11,000 care home residents are not being fed properly or are being left without food and drink every year, government figures recently revealed.

Since the start of 2015 some 312 homes were found to be in breach of basic standards to ensure residents aren't hungry or dehydrated.

The crisis is an indisputable, damning verdict on Tory austerity.

Complaints about home care have jumped by a quarter in the past year alone and complaints over residential homes have risen by 21 percent.

Quality

Yet as the quality of care slumps, fees have soared by more than 20 percent in just one year.

Tens of thousands of older people in care homes are also being hit with bills for

BACK STORY

Tory austerity has caused a growing crisis in social care

- Funding for adult social care has been slashed by a third in some areas since 2010
- Government figures show some care home residents are not being fed properly
- If bosses' profits are threatened they close down—5,000 beds have gone in the last 18 months
- The crisis has a knock on effect as hospitals can't discharge patients due to lack of care

hidden extras.

At some point one in five has received a shock bill. Examples include a £2,000 "management fee" or a £1,000 phone charge, according to Citizens Advice.

A huge turnover in staff sees one in seven workers employed in care homes on contracts with no guaranteed hours.

Low pay is endemic.

And while the Tories attack migrants, some 90,000 European Union migrants make up 7 percent of the workforce. One in five care workers was born outside Britain.

Big firms make millions from care homes.

But if bosses' profits are threatened, they don't hesitate to drop the poor, sick and vulnerable.

At least 250 residential care homes have closed since March, with 5,000 beds lost over the past 18 months. This is fuelling other crises.

Delayed discharges from hospital due to a lack of suitable care outside have rocketed by 224 percent since 2010.

The Tories' worship of the market is causing this crisis. Labour and the trade union leaders should launch a real fightback against austerity.



PROTESTING AGAINST care cuts in Glasgow last year

PICTURE: DUNCAN BROWN

Tory 'counter-terrorism' and Prevent has driven up Islamophobic racism

ACTIVISTS SLAMMED the Tories' "Prevent" strategy at an Islamic Human Rights Commission's (IHRC) event last Saturday.

Up to 100 people attended its conference on the Environment of Hate and the Police State in London.

The Tories are spearheading their assault on Muslims with Prevent, first brought in by Tony Blair's New Labour.

Their Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 now legally forces public sector workers to spy for signs of "radicalisation".

David Miller, professor of sociology at Bath University, argued that the rise in Islamophobia is being pushed from the top.

"The counterterrorism apparatus—the Home Office, the police, the forces of the state—drives Islamophobia," he said.

"That apparatus has massively expanded since the introduction of Prevent and the Counter Terrorism Act has expanded it through the public sector."

"That's what drives what's going on in the streets."

Some activists were pessimistic about the prospects for resistance.



Muslims join an anti-racist protest

But this ignores the united struggles of Asian, black and white workers against Islamophobia, racism and fascism.

The divisions caused by scapegoating Muslims do not benefit any workers.

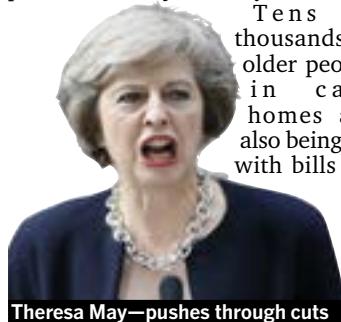
The afternoon session on resisting Prevent in education, where struggles are taking place, was more optimistic.

Rob Ferguson, an NUT teachers' union member in Newham, east London, argued that Prevent was introduced in response to resistance.

"In 2005 the government was in the middle of the Iraq disaster and the majority of people opposed the war," he said. "The majority of people also blamed terror acts on Britain's foreign policy."

Rob said the government dressed up Prevent to "bring over people who'd been part of the anti-war movement and wouldn't buy into naked Islamophobia".

This experience shows that it is possible to forge a powerful alliance between the left, anti-racists and Muslims. It will take a broader movement against racism to beat back the assault on Muslims.



On other pages...
Labour, Ukip and workers
>>Pages 14&15

Theresa May—pushes through cuts

Resistance to austerity on streets of Greece

A general strike showed how to beat European Union-imposed austerity, writes **Alistair Farrow**

A GENERAL strike brought Greece to a standstill ahead of MPs voting on the 2017 budget last week.

Thousands filled the streets of the capital Athens during the walkout last Thursday. Panos Garganas, editor of Socialist Worker's sister newspaper Workers' Solidarity, said, "There was a continuous stream of strikers marching.

"They started at different points and converged on parliament."

Although transport was at a standstill in the morning, workers started it up later on so people could travel to strike rallies in the city.

Sea farers, who'd been striking since the previous Thursday, voted to extend their strike by another 48 hours. They ended it on Sunday.

The European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund are demanding the left wing Syriza government slashes pensions and workplace rights.

Brutal

Syriza was elected in 2014 promising to deliver change—but has continued with brutal austerity.

Prime minister Alexis Tsipras has tried to win back some support with a one-off Christmas payment to 1.6 million pensioners. But the EU slammed even these modest proposals.

A meeting of eurozone finance ministers on Monday of last week announced that Greece's debt repayments would be briefly suspended.

The Syriza government praised the move, but it will find few cheerleaders in the workers' movement.

As the GSEE private sector union said, "The burden we carry is already unbearable."

This general strike followed a public sector general strike last month—and workers aren't pausing after their latest action.

Panos told Socialist Worker how hospital workers are striking this Wednesday to demand more money.

"And on 23 December, water

BACK STORY

Workers in Greece staged a general strike last Thursday

- It was designed to put pressure on MPs as they voted on the 2017 budget
- The bosses' EU and IMF are demanding more brutal austerity measures
- The left wing Syriza government has discredited itself by implementing austerity
- But the left is growing within the workers movement, which can still beat austerity

workers threatened with privatisation are organising a rally," he added.

Bosses recently had to call off a shareholders' meeting where the firm's profits were going to be distributed as dividends.

"Because the state is the main shareholder, the dividends would go to paying off the debt," explained Panos.

"The union was opposed and said the money should go to the workers."

Another shareholders' meeting is set to take place on 23 December. Bosses will try to distribute the dividends again—and workers will protest again to stop the meeting.

While all these struggles are ongoing, the left within the workers' movement is organising and growing.

At the Adedy public sector union's conference, organisations to the left of Syriza came out stronger than before.

Syriza's sellouts have undermined its authority on the left and in the working class movement.

But the general strike last week shows that workers have the power to beat austerity.



On other pages...

Abortion rights under attack in Ohio >> Page 16



PART OF the march in the capital Athens last Thursday

PICTURE: WORKERS' SOLIDARITY

Syria—tragedy of defeated revolution

SYRIAN DICTATOR Bashar al-Assad's forces have seized the whole of the city of Aleppo.

This was no liberation. There were repeated reports of massacres and of civilians fleeing for their lives.

The latest moves follow months of bombing and shelling by the Syrian army and its main sponsor, Russia.

Russia's state broadcaster boasted of their force's role in grabbing Aleppo.

The US and Britain have condemned the assaults.

They are hypocrites. The horrors in the Middle East did not begin with the brutality of the Assad regime or the Russian imperialist intervention.

The US and Britain have long supported dictators such as Hosni Mubarak in Egypt or Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia.

Tony Blair and George Bush's invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan wrecked those countries.

And it is impossible to condemn Assad while selling arms to the Saudi Arabian regime which has rained down death on civilians in Yemen.

Syria shows the barbarity of a ruling class when it sees a threat to its power.

In 2011 a revolution swept Syria. It was a genuine popular revolt and part of the revolutionary wave across the Arab world.

But it was isolated and

defeated, and its mass revolutionary energy snuffed out.

As Syria fell apart, competing powers rushed to intervene in their own interests.

Meanwhile the people of Syria have been murdered and driven from their homes. As refugees they have then faced the walls designed to keep them out of "sympathetic" European countries.

Further bombing and intervention by the blood-soaked outside powers are no solution. "No fly zones" or "aid from the air" would be policed by Western planes and will lead to more war.

Syria today is what ruling class reaction and imperialism look like.

FIGURE IT OUT

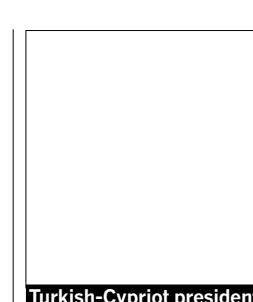
1 billion euros in new taxes have been levied in Greece's 2017 austerity budget

1 billion euros have also been slashed from public spending in the budget

49 billion euros is the additional amount that the EU and IMF are demanding in cuts from 2019

A SERIES of general strikes in Northern Cyprus are turning into a revolt against the government following a fatal road accident last month.

Workers in Northern Cyprus were set to stage a third general strike over the issue this Friday. They are demanding that parliament passes a motion of no confidence in the



Turkish-Cypriot president

government after a crash killed two school children and their bus driver.

The strikers blame the government for the crash due to disrepair on the roads and a decision not to turn the clocks back for winter.

A protest during a general strike on Tuesday of last week saw students clash with police outside the prime minister's office.

Longer at socialistworker.co.uk

Labour's Iraq shame

LABOUR MPs are saving their own backs too (Cowardly Labour MPs vote to protect Tony Blair over war in Iraq, Socialist Worker online).

They backed Blair's illegal war—so they're associated with someone who should be a convicted war criminal.

That's why they voted to take the heat off Blair so they can talk about "collective responsibility", and ponder on "the lessons to be learned".

That really means taking no responsibility and serving no justice at all.

It's as bad as saying, regards Jimmy Savile, let's not play the blame game this was "society's problem". It's a total and utter cowardly cop-out.

Labour needs purging of its careerist, selfseeking elements. How else can it become an effective force again?

Brad Bradshaw
 On Facebook

• I WISH the Blairites would form a breakaway party. Otherwise perhaps it's time for a new credible workers' opposition party.

Ciarrai Mag Fhionnghaile
 On Facebook

Closures hurt poor

TERRIBLE NEWS that closures of Sure Start centres doubled in England last year.

Shutting centres meant for disadvantaged children makes a mockery of Theresa May's talk of helping the poor.

Kathy Light
 West London

Casey's report reflects an imperialist mindset

LOUISE CASEY'S review on segregation is a blow to Muslims in Britain.

Muslim Engagement and Development (Mend) was right to say it was yet another report that talked about Muslims without talking to them.

It feels like another example of officials looking down on people and asking, "How are the brown people doing now?"

The report will only add to the Islamophobia and

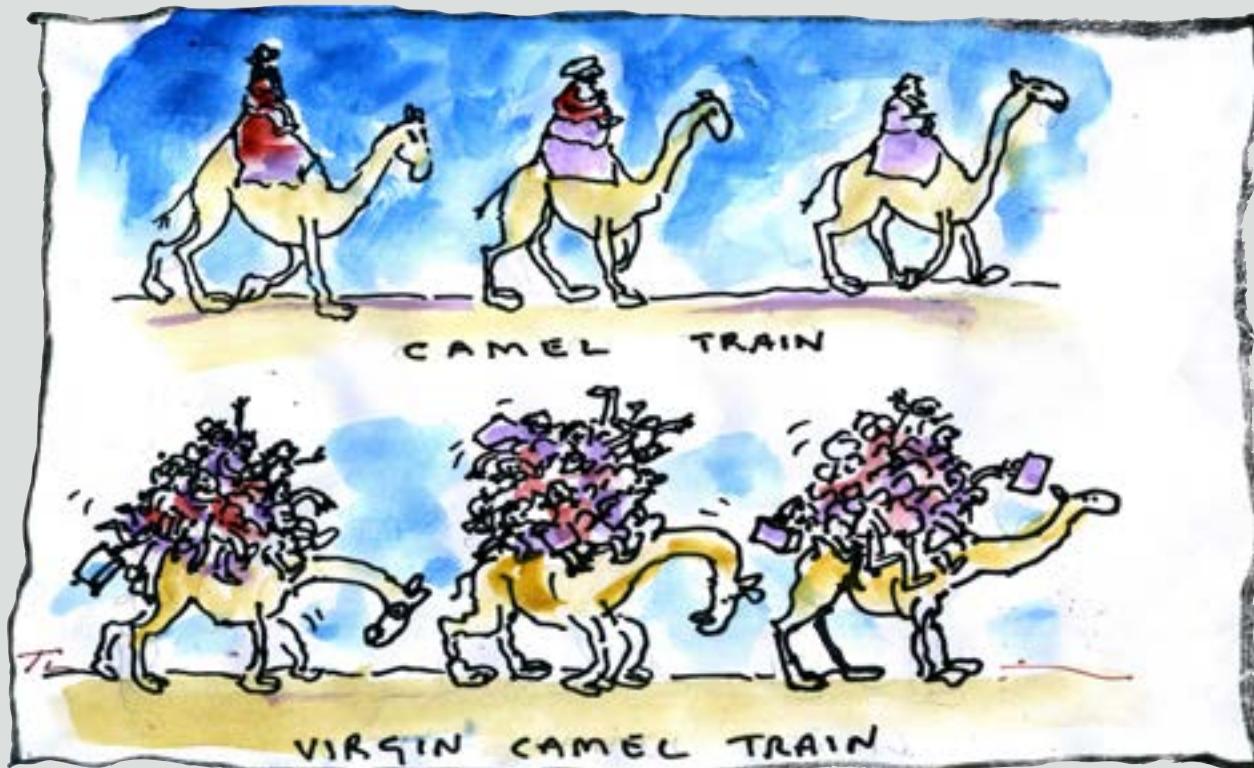


ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Just a thought...

Help to save disability gym

I AM running a campaign to save the last place that offers long term rehabilitation in London.

The closest similar service is in Birmingham.

This is the service that helps people with nerve damage from strokes or broken backs to walk again.

It's an absolutely critical service.

Sign the petition at bit.ly/2fi7UCs

Richard Amm
 South East London

RAR gives us lessons today

I WAS there! (Remembering Rock Against Racism, Socialist Worker, 7 December).

We need more anti-racist music on demos today.

Linda Jones
 On Facebook

Single market blocks revolt

THE SINGLE market also stifles change (Socialist Worker, 7 December).

It allows local cultural sclerosis such as monarchy, non-democratic governments, etc.

This helps build the power of the unelected centre. A cross-Europe revolution would be crushed.

If Britain were a sovereign state again, a real socialism would become a possibility.

Aaron Aalborg
 On Facebook

Where was Farage march?

THE GRAND Old Duke of York may indeed have had no idea where to march his 10,000 men. Nonetheless, he had 10,000 men.

As Socialist Worker reported (30 November), Nigel Farage threatened to march 100,000. The 100,000 didn't materialise.

John Curtis
 Suffolk

No to Merkel ban on burka

ANGELA MERKEL'S call for a burka ban is very worrying.

It will encourage racists here to say the same. We have to stand with Muslims against it.

Karen Eaves
 Bradford

Save trees in Sheffield

racism that Muslims already face.

It comes at a time when there is a lot of talk about "Great Britain" and "Making America great again". It's a very imperialist mindset.

The idea of being "great" means looking down on others who supposedly are not great. It means ghettoising some parts of society.

Muserat Sujawal
 Leeds

ANYBODY WHO thinks Labour is good on the environment should see what Sheffield Labour council is doing down my street.

Western Road, Crookes, has an avenue of 50-odd mature trees. They were planted in 1919 in remembrance of scholars from the local school killed in the First World War.

These trees are of immense historical and social importance.

Some of the threatened trees on Western Road, Sheffield

They also help combat pollution, provide habitats for wildlife, and help peoples' wellbeing.

The council wants to cut half of them down.

Action Group (STAG) to protest against this.

And contact council leader Julie Dore at juliedore@sheffield.gov.uk

Arthur Baker
 Sheffield

Workers in Solihull near Birmingham are facing down the super-rich and super-hated BHS boss Philip Green. They work on the minimum wage filling orders for his Arcadia Group. For years they accepted poor pay and conditions. But not any more...

FRESH FROM stealing BHS workers' pensions, robber baron Sir Philip Green is trying to rip off distribution workers.

From a warehouse in Solihull, the workers keep the disgraced billionaire's retail empire stocked across the West Midlands.

Every day they send out thousands of internet orders for the Arcadia Group's high street shops, such as Top Shop, Burton and Miss Selfridge.

Warehouse operator DHL claims that "these are exciting times" to come to work for the company. In reality, the Arcadia business model is based on the brutal treatment of those working inside its warehouses.

Arcadia's bullying attitude is driving workers to take on the company over pay. The GMB union members struck for 24 hours last Thursday and again on Monday of this week. They want a rise to £8.45 an hour instead of the present £7.20.

Jack, a warehouse worker, told Socialist Worker, "We feel anonymous inside there, we might as well be wearing those masks. If I had to sum it up, I'd say that they were more interested in stocks than staff."

He added, "They've actually got posters inside telling us to treat everyone with fairness and respect. It's such rubbish—we don't get treated with fairness or respect by them."

Belinda, another warehouse worker, agreed, "We've all got recognisable numbers—and that's all we are to them. They used to have a staff survey, but they got rid of it last year because the results were so bad for the company's name."

Arcadia makes sure orders go out quickly by piling pressure on workers. Tom works on the "pick" section where products are selected before

FIGURE IT OUT 1

£3,829

The operating profit DHL, the company that runs the warehouse, makes every minute

£4.10

The amount extra it would cost per minute to pay every worker in the warehouse a living wage

£1.80

The amount workers were docked in pay if they were one minute late

they're sent off to high street stores.

"Pick is shocking to work on but it's the same on all sections," he told Socialist Worker.

"You're always frantically running around."

Workers said some of the conditions had been worse before the GMB union began organising the workplace. Jeremy said, "If you were one minute late for work, they'd dock 15 minutes of your pay.

"If you'd go to the toilet, they'd ask why you were taking so long.

He added, "But it still just seems so archaic and Dickensian."

Management drive the growing intensity of work through the hated KPI—"key performance indicators".

Jack said, "I was measured about five or six years ago by a 'time and

motion' man with his clipboard and stop watch.

He explained, "If you're packing you've got to do around 100 units an hour. If you're on collections, who get the orders from the different parts of the warehouse, you've got to get through around 200 units an hour."

Bosses enforce these targets with disciplinary action.

Tom said, "We had a three-strike policy, similar to what Sports Direct has. If you miss targets the first time, you get a telling off. If you miss it the second time, you're taken upstairs.

"If it's the third time, you can be out of the door."

Workers are brutally exploited—and to many it's clear that bosses are squeezing their profits out of them. Sanjeev told Socialist Worker, "I was unloading products a couple of years ago where garments come in.

"They were bought at a cost price of £5.99—I studied accounting so I know that the cost price includes everything, including wages. These were then sold off at £22.99 after we'd packed them.

"Every day we handle hundreds of thousands of garments—think how much money they're making!"

As well as poverty wages and performance targets, this is all done in terrible workplace conditions. Jack said, "They don't even care about the

FIGURE IT OUT 2

£100 million

The cost of Philip Green's latest super yacht

2.9%

The entire workforce's yearly wage as a percentage of the value of Green's yacht

more "flexible".

DHL relies on "just in time" methods. This means that materials are only delivered just before they are needed on the production line, to minimise storage costs and boost profits.

DHL treats its workforce at the Arcadia warehouse in the same way, with what Tom described as "a very high turnover".

A minority of the workers have permanent contracts, but Arcadia is relying more and more on workers with "fixed term" contracts and agency workers.

Arcadia bosses want to move people onto new "flexible" contracts so they can attack workers' conditions even further.

Jack said, "If someone mentions wanting overtime, there's always 'friendly' suggestions that you could go onto the new contract.

"But I don't know anyone who's done that because you just end up losing out."

"If you're on the flex contract you have to work bank holidays unless you book them off, which you're unlikely to get."

"There's no 'time and a half after 40 hours'."

Belinda explained what working on one of these "flexible" contracts could mean. "The flexible contract the company introduced is just about getting cheap labour in at short notice," she said.

To ensure high profits, Arcadia has tried to force its workforce to become

FIGURE IT OUT 3

32p

The cost price of a plain T-shirt

£14.99

The retail price of the same T-shirt

there's no chance to plan your life.

"On a flexible contract you can get asked on the day to flex down or up between 23 and 48 hours a week."

"Last week one group was asked to give 18 weeks' notice in advance—how can you plan your life 18 weeks in advance?"

"Then last week management told another lot they didn't need people to work that long."

"People just get messed around."

Belinda added, "It's good that the government has said there should be a new minimum wage but we're actually worse off now."

Jack explained, "With our pension contributions, we went below the minimum wage. So they said we should step out of the company's pension scheme and into the government's worse one."

"So we're going to lose out even after we stop working here."

The dispute about wages has come out of an ongoing war on workers at the firm.

Since Arcadia has owned the warehouse, it's relentlessly attacked conditions to maximise profits.

As Belinda said, "Day to day it's just crap—and it's only got worse during the last twenty years."

Jack, who's worked at the company for a long period, said, "We used to get a morning, night and weekend shift allowance."

"But now a lot of that has gone."

These attacks also spurred workers on to organise—and build a union around ten years ago.

A GMB rep told Socialist Worker, "The company fought tooth and nail not to let us in."

"It started with two or three of us who made contact with the union."

Even in a "precarious" situation, they fought and got union recognition—and as a result of the dispute the union is growing.

Ben told Socialist Worker, "We had around 100 people in the union before the strike began. Some didn't want to join to not cause waves."

"But we don't have to cause waves by ourselves, we can do it together. Now more and more people are joining the union."

This dispute shines a light on how logistics function under capitalism.

Every trade unionist should support the strikers, build solidarity for their dispute—and help give billionaire Sir Philip Green a bloody nose.

Names have been changed to protect the strikers
Send messages of support to dominic.hinks@gmb.org.uk

STRIKING BACK JUST-IN-TIME

Words Tomáš Tengely-Evans
Pictures Guy Smallman

(above and below) Unity on the picket line at Arcadia in Solihull, Birmingham



Workers are brutally exploited—and to many it's clear that bosses are squeezing their profits out of them. Sanjeev told Socialist Worker, "I was unloading products a couple of years ago where garments come in.

"They were bought at a cost price of £5.99—I studied accounting so I know that the cost price includes everything, including wages. These were then sold off at £22.99 after we'd packed them.

"Every day we handle hundreds of thousands of garments—think how much money they're making!"

As well as poverty wages and performance targets, this is all done in terrible workplace conditions. Jack said, "They don't even care about the

upkeep of the place.

"Three of the lifts inside don't work, but they haven't fixed them. One of them hasn't worked for ten years, the other broke down two weeks ago and the other about a week ago."

But that doesn't matter to bosses at Arcadia because "it just means staff have to double carry things".

He added, "In the winter the warehouse is freezing so they eventually installed heaters in one section, but it never warms up. They put the heaters on the top floor, probably because heat rises, right?"

"Now they've got blowers up on my floor because it's so hot that I always have a sore throat. The other floors still aren't warmed up."

To ensure high profits, Arcadia has tried to force its workforce to become

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To ensure high profits, Arcadia has tried to force its workforce to become



ANALYSIS

Is this the end for national strikes?

by CHARLIE KIMBER

It's a disgrace that the Tories passed this law so easily.

The unions put up only token opposition. There was never a serious effort to mobilise on the streets, let alone to encourage strikes.

Many trade union leaders have used the spectre of the law as an argument against struggle. Now some are likely to accept that big national strikes are impossible.

MPs voted through the

Act last May, but it was not fully enforced until the "commencement order" spelling out the details.

To have a legal strike, a ballot must have a 50 percent turnout.

Strikes in "important public services" are valid only if there is a yes vote by 40 percent of those who are entitled to vote.

The first requirement means that if 100 people are balloted then at least 50 must vote.

In important services, not

but only must at least 50 take part, but at least 40 must vote yes.

If, for example, there is a 70 percent vote for strikes by health workers on a 50 percent turnout, a strike would breach the new laws.

But if the unions were bold enough to call their members out, millions of other trade unionists—and NHS campaigners—would be on the strikers' side.

We shouldn't accept that a union can't hit a 50 percent turnout. A union which has a strong network of confident reps can mobilise a large vote. But that requires systematically encouraging struggle.

Lacking

This has been wholly lacking from the trade union leaders, especially since they abandoned the public sector pensions battle in 2011.

A study by Professor Ralph Darlington and Dr John Dobson looked at ballots from 1997 to 2015. It found that although 440,000 workers could still have taken action under the new laws, 3.3 million could not.

But that's not the end of the debate.

McCluskey has failed to encourage real resistance from Grangemouth oil refinery to the NHS to steel. He openly opposed Jeremy Corbyn on Trident renewal.

There is a clear case to be made for a left candidate. Even if that doesn't happen there can be no blank cheque for McCluskey.

The anti-union laws pose new challenges. Activists need to think how they can build more struggle locally as well as nationally.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER }

BRANCH MEETINGS
Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism

Wed 4 Jan, 6pm, Belmont Cinema Cafe, 49 Belmont St, AB10 1JS

BARNESLEY

Is Europe moving to the right or left?

Thu 5 Jan, 7pm, YMCA, Blucher St, S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

Is the media all powerful?

Wed 4 Jan, 7pm, Birmingham LGBT Centre, 38/40 Holloway Circus, B1 1EQ

BRISTOL

A rebel's guide to Leon Trotsky

Wed 4 Jan, 7.30pm, YHA,

14 Narrow Quay, BS1 4QA

CAMBRIDGE

Bring down the borders—why we oppose all immigration controls

Thu 5 Jan, 7.30pm,

Signal Box, Glenalmond Avenue (off Clarendon Rd), CB2 8DB

CARDIFF

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism

Wed 21 Dec, 7.30pm, Cathays Community Centre, Cathays Terrace, CF24 4HX

CHESTERFIELD

A rebel's guide to Antonio Gramsci

Thu 5 Jan, 7.30pm, Chesterfield Library, New Beetwell St, S40 1QN

DUNDEE

War and imperialism in the Middle East

Wed 4 Jan, 7.30pm, Dundee Voluntary Action, 10 Constitution Rd, DD1 1LL

EXETER

Why does Santa wear red?

Thu 22 Dec, 6.30pm, New Horizon Cafe, 47 Longbrook St, EX4 6AW

HUDDERSFIELD

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism

Wed 4 Jan, 6.30pm, Brian Jackson House, 2 New North Parade (near both train and bus stations), HD1 5JP

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

HS2—what should socialists say?

Thu 5 Jan, 7pm, The Swarthmore Education Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square, LS3 1AD

LONDON: EALING

In the era of Trump—how powerful is the media?

Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, Y Lounge, YMCA West London, 25 St Mary's Rd, W5 2RE

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism

Thu 5 Jan, 7pm, The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

NORWICH

Hungary 1956—when workers seized control

Thu 5 Jan, 7.30pm, Vauxhall Centre, Johnson Place, NR2 2SA

SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

Prospects for socialists in 2017

BRADFORD

Thu 12 Jan, 7pm, Glyde House, Little Horton Lane (opposite the ice rink), BD5 0BQ

BURNLEY

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Red Triangle Cafe, 160 St. James's St, BB11 1NR

COLCHESTER

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, The Odd One Out, 28 Mersea Rd, CO2 7ET

EDINBURGH

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, 7 Victoria St, EH1 2JL

GLASGOW

Thu 12 Jan, 7pm, Avant Garde, 33-44 King St, Merchant City, G1 5QT

HARLOW

Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, 1 Church Leys, CM18 6BX

LANCASTER

Thu 12 Jan, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, Meeting House Lane, LA1 1TX

PORTSMOUTH

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism
Wed 4 Jan, 7.30pm, Somerstown Community Centre, River's St, PO5 4EZ

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

Is a robot after your job?

Thu 5 Jan, 7pm, Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk St (near Crucible Theatre), S1 2JB

SWANSEA

Hinkley Point—do we really need nuclear power?

Thu 5 Jan, 7.30pm, Brynmill Community Centre, St Albans Rd, SA2 0BP

WAKEFIELD

Castro, Cuba and the fight for socialism

Thu 5 Jan, 7pm, Lightwaves Centre, Lower York St, WF1 3LJ

WOLVERHAMPTON

Andwalsall

A rebel's guide to Eleanor Marx
Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, The Royal Hotel, Ablewell St, WS1 2EL

LONDON: BRENT AND HARROW

Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, The Pepperpot Centre, 1a Thorpe Close, Ladbrooke Grove (very close to the station), W10 5XL

LONDON: BRIXTON

Wed 11 Jan, 7pm, Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd, facing Windrush Square), SW12 1EP

LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, The Round Chapel, 2 Powerscroft Rd (corner Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

LONDON: HARINGEY

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, St John Vianney Church Hall, 386 West Green Rd (corner Vincent Rd), N15 3QH

LONDON: LEWISHAM

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, West Greenwich Community and Arts Centre, 141 Greenwich High Rd (near Greenwich main line and DLR station), SE10 8JA

LONDON: NEWHAM

Wed 11 Jan, 7pm, Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove (next to Morrisons car park), E15 1HP

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 11 Jan, 7pm, Oxford House, Derbyshire St (opposite Bethnal Green Rd Tesco), E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Quaker Meeting House, 1a Jewel Rd (off Hoe St), E17 4QU

MANCHESTER

Thu 12 Jan, 7pm, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS

MEDWAY

Thu 12 Jan, 7.30pm, Nucleus Arts Centre (Conference Room), 272 High St, ME4 4BP

NEWCASTLE

Thu 12 Jan, 7pm, Broadacre House, Market St, NE1 6HQ

NOTTINGHAM

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Rd, NG1 3FN

OXFORD

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Restore, NE1 6HQ

Manzil Way (off Cowley Rd), OX4 1YH

PLYMOUTH

Wed 11 Jan, 7pm, Quaker House, 74 Mutley Plain, PL4 6LF

SOUTHAMPTON

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Central Baptist Church Hall, Devonshire Rd, SO15 2GY

ST ALBANS

Wed 11 Jan, 7.30pm, Trinity Church Hall (upstairs), 1 Beaconsfield Rd (near St Albans City station), AL1 3RD

TELFORD

Thu 19 Jan, 7.30pm, Carriages, The Parade, Wellington, TF1 1PY

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Larry Sanders (Green Party)

Kelvin Hopkins MP (Labour Party)

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What good are nuclear weapons against climate change, health pandemics or the refugee crisis?

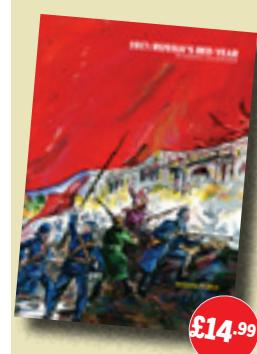
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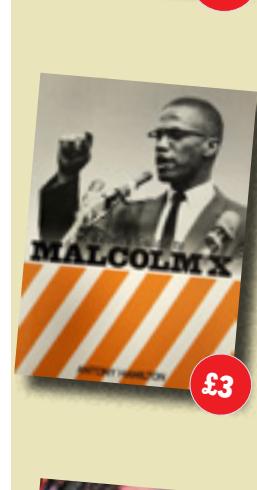
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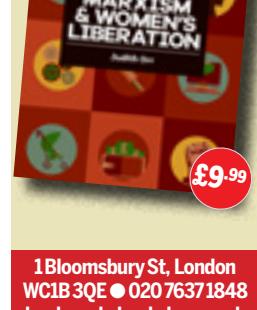
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Bronte sisters strove to be judged on their own terms

To Walk Invisible is a thoughtful TV drama but the turmoil and struggle of the time Charlotte, Emily and Anne wrote about doesn't get a look in, says **Sadie Robinson**

THE BRONTE sisters are often characterised as using their bleak West Yorkshire surroundings to write brilliant novels. The much bleaker personal circumstances that drove them to write is less talked about.

To Walk Invisible, a new BBC drama, tells the story of their lives. Charlotte, Emily and Anne grew up in Haworth, near Bradford, in the early 1800s.

This was a time when women didn't have the vote and they had to pose as men to get published. Emily says, "When a man writes something, what's written is judged. When a woman writes, it's her that's judged." Charlotte concludes, "We must walk invisible."

They are invisible in other ways. Their father, Patrick, is blind before having an operation to restore his sight.

And their brother, Branwell, is too engrossed in alcoholism to notice them much of the time. As Anne puts it, "Does he even see us?"

Stress

Branwell has a huge impact on their lives. They wrote under immense stress. In one scene they are working in one room as Branwell abuses his father in the next, shouting and demanding money for drink.

The programme shows all the conflicting emotions this stirs up in the sisters and how each responds to it differently.

Emily at one time physically threatens Branwell and at another comforts him as debt collectors threaten to cart him off to jail.



THE BRONTE sisters as depicted in *To Walk Invisible*

PICTURE: BBC

There is a deep sadness and frustration in their lives because of Branwell.

But his drinking drives them to make a living out of writing so they can support themselves.

Having said that, the Brontes were well off. Their lives were nothing like the lives of most women in the early 19th century.

It is striking that Charlotte complains to Emily about life being

so much harder for women before casually asking, "Are you still going to Paris?"

The dialogue is good and there's humour in it. It feels true to life—as the women felt their novels were, compared to the sanitised novels of the time.

Their determination to succeed—sending manuscript after manuscript to different publishers—is impressive. They have to dupe the postman in order to get the replies, which are of course addressed to men who don't exist.

Determined

But Emily is characterised as more likeable than Charlotte, who is the most determined. It isn't clear if this is a judgement on how women should behave.

And there isn't much detail of their work in the programme, save for some of Emily's poems.

The Brontes wrote at a time of social turmoil and class struggle.

There is little reference to this besides Charlotte noting that one reviewer described the author of Jane Eyre as linked to revolution in Europe and Chartism, a huge working class movement that put fear in the heart of the British establishment.

There's a question over whether the settings are too sanitised—there are no open sewers in the street, for instance. And there's an awful sensory scene nearer the end.

But none of this should put you off watching this moving and thoughtful programme.

To Walk Invisible, by Sally Wainwright, BBC1, Thursday 29 December, 9pm

There are better reads on Britain's year of revolution

BOOK

1919—BRITAIN'S YEAR OF REVOLUTION

by Simon Webb
Published by Pen and Sword History, £19.99

THE 1917 Russian Revolution was a flaring beacon of hope for working and oppressed people across the globe.

It inspired a great revolutionary wave across a Europe exhausted and scarred by the First World War's bloody carnage.

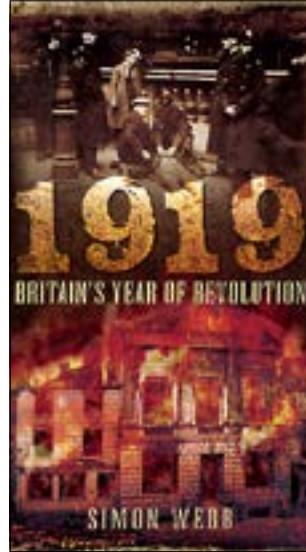
Britain was no exception, with 1919 representing a high point in working class struggle

unmatched since in its breadth or scale.

In 1919 over 34 million working days were "lost" due to strikes compared to an average of 4.5 million for each of the preceding four years.

Two thousand soldiers, ordered to embark for France, instead mutinied and formed a "Soldiers Union". Even the police force struck and demanded the right to unionise.

In Glasgow 100,000 workers struck for a 40-hour week. Sailors from the HMS Kilbride refused to go to sea and hoisted a red flag. Britain's prime minister told the trade



union leaders "we are at your mercy". Britain was on the brink of revolution.

Simon Webb's book attempts to uncover why these momentous events are now written out of British history, to shed light on their scale and make sense of why they occurred.

In chronicling some of this period he vividly conveys how close Britain came to revolution. The problem however is with the analysis.

Webb seems to lack the intellectual tools needed to understand the actions of the people and organisations embroiled in

this massive struggle.

His view of the state as a neutral arbiter in the battle between labour and capital means everything it does to maintain "order" is justifiable—be it slaughtering over 500 rebels in the Punjab to stationing warships on the Clyde or Mersey.

1919 is a crucially important year for the British working class but it has received better treatment in other books.

My advice would be to get a copy of Chanie Rosenberg's marvellous short book 1919, Britain on the Brink of Revolution. **Jeff Jackson**

EXHIBITION

EDMUND CLARK: WAR OF TERROR

Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, London SE1 6HZ. Until 28 August 2017. Free entry

ARTIST-photographer Edmund Clark has created several series of works exploring state control during the "Global War on Terror".

This thought-provoking exhibition looks at issues of security, secrecy, representation and legality.

The show focuses on the measures taken by states to "protect" their citizens from the threat

Part of the War of Terror exhibition

of terrorism, and their far-reaching effects.

The exhibition brings together a variety of images and documents of CIA operated secret "black sites", including photographs from the US torture camp at Guantanamo Bay.

This is an immersive experience, that invokes a sensory engagement with the experiences of the systems of control Clark explores.

TOP 5 BOOKS

Bestsellers at Bookmarks, the socialist Bookshop

1 **1917: Russia's Red Year**
Tim Sanders and John Newsinger

2 **Reminiscences of RAR—Rocking Against Racism 1976-1982**
Roger Huddle and Red Saunders

3 **The Leveller Revolution**
John Rees

4 **Another day in the death of America**
Gary Younge

5 **Lenin on the train**
Catherine Merridale

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THERE'S a constant, steady stream of Labour politicians who tell us the party is losing supporters to Ukip.

It's become fashionable again to talk about how Labour is losing votes among the "white working class" in its heartlands. The reason, allegedly, is immigration.

The right argue that Labour has become dominated by London-based, liberal elite.

They say that becoming a working class party again means shifting to the right.

Welsh Labour leader Carwyn Jones is one of the most recent ones.

He said last Thursday that defending free movement of people is a "London-centric position".

"People see it very differently in Labour-supporting areas of the north of England," he said.

"We have to be very careful that we don't drive our supporters into the arms of Ukip."

It came after new Ukip leader Paul Nuttall declared his party would replace Labour by appealing to working class voters.

In Scotland, where Ukip is nowhere and Labour has been in terminal decline, this debate does not play out. The Scottish National Party continues to cement its dominance of the political landscape.

And the results of recent by-elections tell a different, more complex story.

In three recent by-elections seats traditionally seen as Labour strongholds—Oldham, Osgmore, and Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough—Ukip came second to Labour.

But this isn't evidence that Ukip is growing at Labour's expense.

Lost

Labour's share of the vote went up by 7.3 percent in Oldham, and it rose by 5.9 percent in Sheffield, where Ukip's share fell.

Where Ukip increased its share—by 2.8 percent in Oldham and 1.2 percent in Osgmore—it was the Tories who lost out.

They dropped by 9.6 percent and 3.3 percent in those seats.

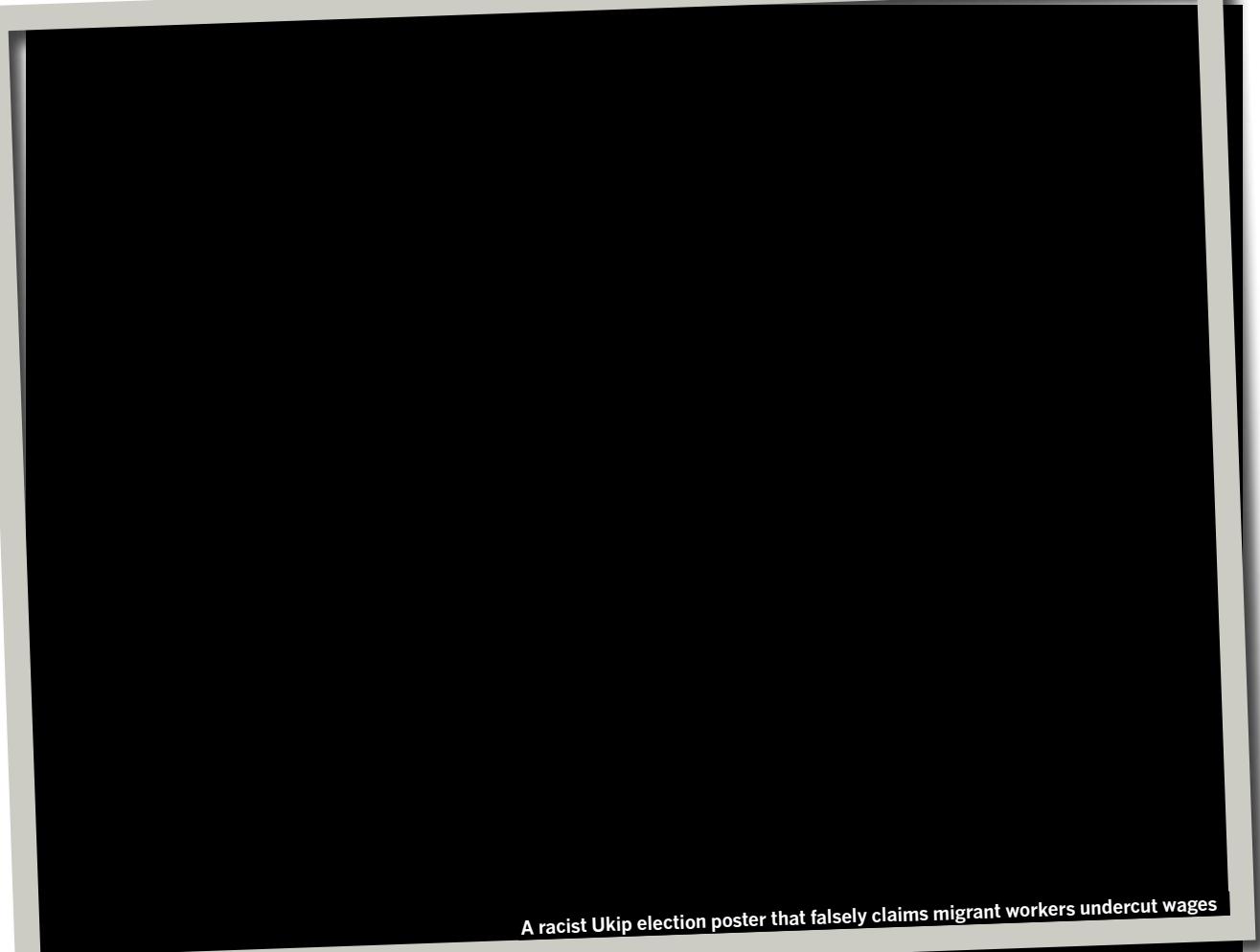
It's the same at a local council level.

A council by-election in Hartlepool in the North East made national news in October when Ukip won the seat from Labour.

Ukip's candidate came from nowhere to take nearly 50 percent of the vote, while both Labour and the Tories' shares dropped dramatically.

The win was reported in the media as a warning to Labour.

Yet in recent council elections and by-elections where Ukip's vote share has risen, more often than not it's because



A racist Ukip election poster that falsely claims migrant workers undercut wages

LABOUR, UKIP AND WORKERS

Labour politicians claim the party has to be 'tougher' on immigration—or risk losing workers to Ukip. Nick Clark argues that aping the racist party will only fuel its success

they've taken Tory voters.

Bolton is a good example. Ukip gained two seats from Labour there at the council elections last May—but both came because of a swing from the Tories.

In many other places where Ukip's vote share rises, so does Labour's.

But there are also places where Labour's share goes up while Ukip's falls.

And where Labour's vote share falls, it tends to have lost

In many places where Ukip's vote share rises so does the Labour Party's

New Ukip leader racist Paul Nuttall

out to other forces such as independents, Liberal Democrats or Plaid Cymru in Wales.

Often in those places Ukip's share also falls—only more sharply.

So it's a complex picture. Labour is losing some votes to Ukip, but not in massive numbers.

A study by Geoffrey Evans and Jonathan Mellon from Oxford University sheds some light on what's really going on.

They were each called by different groups, including Ukip, a bedroom tax campaign, and the

just before the 2015 general election, what it tells us helps to explain election results in 2016.

The study looked at data from the British Election Study between 2005 and autumn 2014.

Ukip's voters were "overwhelmingly taken from those who voted Conservative in 2010."

"Even the Lib Dems lose more to Ukip than do Labour."

What's more, they also found that Ukip's strongest support comes from the middle class—self-employed people, business owners and managers.

These are not the traditional, core Labour supporters that the right insist are abandoning the party for Ukip.

In fact, even among Ukip supporters that the study classified as workers, the strongest grouping was supervisors.

It wasn't "the disadvantaged semi and unskilled workers that have been thought to provide the core of Ukip support".

So the reason that Ukip has been able to do well in some Labour areas is not because they've massively sapped away Labour's vote.

It's that "there are still a lot of Conservative voters in Labour seats" and it's mostly this group that has helped Ukip to grow.

The picture is complicated by the fact that a number of Ukip supporters in the study—although not the majority—did vote for Labour in 2005.

What's interesting about these people is that most of them had stopped supporting Labour by 2010, but didn't start supporting Ukip until 2014.

They're some of the five million voters who abandoned Labour while it was led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Those five million weren't drawn away by Ukip. But Ukip has since managed to pick up a minority of them by posing as an alternative to the mainstream political parties.

Scapegoating migrants is central to how it does this. And even though Ukip is not directly undercutting Labour's vote, the fact that it has used racism to grow in Labour areas shows it's a threat.

There is growing anger in society.

Ukip isn't taking Labour's voters in droves now. But in the absence of serious resistance to austerity and a genuine political alternative, it has the potential to feed off that anger and grow.

A recent protest called by Ukip in Bolton gave a glimpse of how it might try to do just that.

A number of different protests took place at a full council meeting in Bolton at the end of November.

Although it was carried out

just

before the 2015 general election, what it tells us helps to explain election results in 2016.

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LABOUR responded to Nuttall's election as Ukip leader by claiming "the only thing you need to know" about him is that he wants to privatise the NHS.

It didn't mention the fact that he's also a vicious racist.

It's welcome to see Labour defending the NHS—particularly after some of its previous leaders such as Blair championed privatisation.

That means defending migrants and free movement, not attacking them.

But a left wing alternative has to be anti-racist too. Unfortunately, many in Labour instead think they can put a left spin on Ukip's racism.

So speaking on the morning after the Sleaford election, Labour MP Vernon Coaker said the party had been "squeezed by Brexit."

The problem with this is that it sees the difference between wanting to Remain in the EU and wanting to Leave as a divide between left and right.

So speaking after the Sleaford result, MP Jess

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LABOUR'S CANDIDATE for Manchester mayor Andy Burnham attacked immigration in parliament earlier this month.

He said immigration was "not working for the more deprived areas of this country", and added that "there is nothing socialist about open borders".

Shockingly, he suggested that immigration was "undermining the cohesion of our communities and the safety of our streets".

He then had the nerve to insist he was not "pandering" to racism.

But "pandering" is exactly what Burnham was doing—and it's disastrous.

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New attack on abortion rights in US

by MARY REYNOLDS in Cleveland, Ohio

WE ARE already feeling the effect of Donald Trump's election victory in the US. The war on women's rights has started.

The Ohio state legislature has passed a bill to prohibit abortion as soon as a foetal heartbeat can be detected.

This is at around six weeks—before many women realise they are pregnant. There are no exceptions for cases of rape or incest.

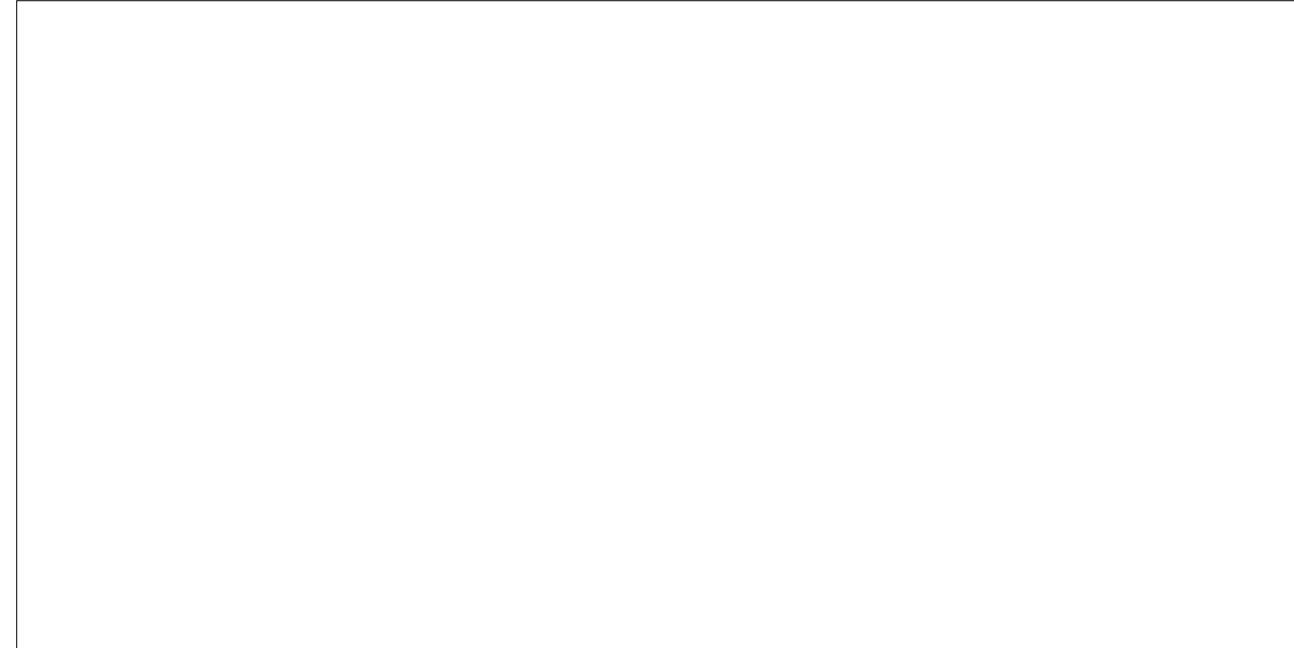
Republican state governor John Kasich has until Friday of this week to decide whether to sign or veto the bill.

Threat

If he signs it, it will pose a threat to Supreme Court decisions that have found that women have a constitutional right to abortion until the point of viability.

This is typically regarded as around 24 weeks.

In the past the courts have halted state bills that tried to



A PROTEST defending abortion rights in the US

cut the abortion time limit. But anti-abortionists now have a new confidence.

They know Trump has promised to put in place Supreme Court judges who will overturn Roe v Wade,

the key case that enshrined women's access to abortion.

The Republican Ohio senate president Keith Faber said, "A new president, new Supreme Court appointees change the dynamic, and

there was consensus in our caucus to move forward."

Even if the "foetal heartbeat" law is stopped, another Ohio proposal could cut the time limit to 20 weeks. This would be a "first step"

by anti-abortion groups to undermine women's rights.

An amendment to the 20-week bill, which would have made an exception for survivors of rape and incest, was defeated.

Kasich has until 28 December to sign or veto the 20-week bill.

If he does nothing to either bill, both automatically become law.

And it's not just in Ohio that the attack is coming.

Texas has forced clinics that provide abortions to either bury or cremate foetal remains.

This adds thousands of dollars to the cost of the procedure.

Unsafe

As always when there are anti-abortion moves, the main effect is that more women turn to unsafe means to terminate pregnancy.

The attacks are terrible. But it's encouraging that there is already outrage about what is happening and the potential for a strong movement to fight back.

Women, especially young women, are not going to just give in.

We have to fight Trump on so many fronts, but the defence of abortion rights is an urgent and crucial one.

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Cheers and celebration as fracking firm beaten

Charges against climate campaigner are dismissed—now anti-fracking activists vow to fight for more wins

ANTI-FRACKING campaigners won a major victory on Friday of last week when a judge dismissed charges of contempt of court against activist Tina Rothery.

Hundreds of Tina's supporters waiting for her outside Preston Crown Court erupted in celebration at the news.

On the steps of the court Tina told them she was not going to jail. She said, "We did it. Justice did prevail. We did get the truth out in court."

Tina's win is a huge defeat for the carbon industry. It is a victory for the right to protest and a vindication of the millions fighting against fracking and climate change.

It shows ordinary people can beat the multinationals.

Tina told Socialist Worker, "This is a victory for activism in general—it shows that it can disrupt this industry's smooth process into our communities."

Fracking firm Cuadrilla had been pursuing Tina for £55,000, the cost of evicting a fracking awareness camp in Lancashire in 2014.

Evicted

The camp was cleaned and empty when it was evicted, as the occupying Lancashire Nanas had told Cuadrilla, the police and the land-owner it would be.

Despite this, Tina's solicitor said he had "never seen a company behave as aggressively and for such a sustained period towards a single protester".

But rather than frighten the movement into silence, Tina's ordeal gave protesters a focus.

Scarborough anti-fracking campaigner Kim Hunter said, "Tina has been an absolute rock."

"Her determination not to be cowed galvanised the huge support outside the court and across the globe, which secured the victory."

The case brought in a new layer of activists. It also highlighted anti-fracking campaigners' common interest with those fighting for truth

BACK STORY

Tina Rothery faced jail after refusing to pay an unjust fine

- She was one of several activists who set up camp at a proposed fracking site near Preston, Lancashire
- Lancashire County Council decided not to allow energy firm Cuadrilla to frack the site
- But Tory minister Sajid Javid overturned the council's decision
- Now anti-fracking campaigners are fighting to keep fracking out of Lancashire

and justice and the right to protest.

The crowd heard messages of support from the Standing Rock Sioux, the Orgreave Truth & Justice campaign, the Rotherham 12, the South Yorkshire Freedom Riders and others.

Speaking at the rally, Lancaster, Morecombe & District NUT president Audrey Glover said, "I want the children I teach to come out of school with the confidence to protest."

Bfawu union organiser John Fox added that the new law against trade union rights would have to be broken.

Lancashire County Council denied Cuadrilla permission to open a fracking site on Preston New Road in Lancashire in 2015.

But Tory communities and local government minister Sajid Javid accepted Cuadrilla's appeal against the decision in October.

He also deferred a decision to open another site at nearby Roseacre Wood.

Meanwhile campaigners in Yorkshire await a High Court review over North Yorkshire County Council decision to allow Third Energy to drill at a village in Ryedale.

The fight to stop fracking is far from over. But as supporter Kathy Clarke put it after Tina's victory, "I feel like anything is possible now."



STRIKING WORKERS from the IT department stage a festive protest in Glasgow

PICTURE: CLARE KERR

Scottish Labour and the SNP bicker over who's to blame for council cuts

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

CUTS TO council budgets in Scotland could total £700 million by the end of this parliament according to a new report.

This is on top of over £1 billion already slashed in the past five years.

The think tank figures, commissioned by a group of Labour councils, were published ahead of the Scottish National Party (SNP) government's budget announcement on Thursday.

Sticks

It argued that councils would see a 10 percent funding cut if the SNP continues to implement Tory austerity and sticks to its manifesto promises.

The SNP committed to increase NHS spending by £500 million more than inflation over five years.

It also said it will maintain police funding and expand free childcare provision by an extra £500 million.

Labour argues the report it has sponsored blows a hole in SNP claims to have kept council

funding settlements broadly the same. The SNP, predictably, argues the opposite.

But ordinary people are suffering while the politicians sling mud at one another ahead of the council elections in May.

Day care and community centres have been closed.

Mental health and social care services are being obliterated. And council workers' jobs and conditions are under attack.

Some 7,000 local government jobs in Scotland have been cut this year alone.

Union leaders in Scotland don't seem to have the stomach for a real fight over the constant attacks from whichever party runs the local council.

Wring

The May elections provide an opportunity to launch industrial action that can wring concessions from politicians when they are more vulnerable to pressure.

Bitterness and anger is rising against both Labour and the SNP.

Everywhere outsourcing and privatisation are on the rise.

Councillors who claim to be

anti-austerity bleat on about having to make "difficult choices" as they axe our services.

A new electoral alliance has formed against the cuts in SNP-run Dundee for May.

The ruling Labour councillors fear another electoral wipe out for their party in Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. Some deselected Labour candidates in North Lanarkshire are now set to run against their former colleagues.

Needed

Council workers in Glasgow give an example of the resistance that is needed across the board.

School janitors working for an outsourced council-run firm are battling to regain benefits lost when Labour hived them off years ago. They went on strike again for five days on Monday.

IT workers are also in the middle of a three-week walkout against privatisation.

These fights must be brought together—not just in Glasgow but at every council across Scotland.

Send messages of solidarity to the strikers at enquiries@glasgowcityunison.co.uk

IN BRIEF

Humbug bosses face pay walkout

WORKERS AT the Tangerine sweets factory in York were set to walk out for 24 hours on 30 December.

The GMB union members have already struck three times for higher pay at the end of last month and on 1 December.

Workers are furious at a 1 percent pay offer from bosses.

Bosses have already attacked their terms and condition and pensions since private equity firm Blackstone took a majority stake in the company in 2011.

Tangerine bosses' brands include Mint Humbugs, Barratt Sherbet Fountains, Butterkist Popcorn and Princess Marshmallows.

Unison officials grilled at hearing

LEADING UNISON union officials were set to be grilled during a three-day hearing held by the Certification Officer early next week.

The hearing is investigating allegations from Unison members that senior Unison officials used their positions—breaking union rules—to get general secretary Dave Prentis re-elected last year.

Many of the complainants encourage Unison members and supporters to attend at least one of the hearing dates to listen to the evidence and decide what it means for the future of the union.

● Certification Officer hearing is set for Mon 19 Dec—Wed 21 Dec, Fleetbank House, London, EC4Y 8JX

Anti-cuts lobby at Kent County Council

TRADE UNIONISTS from around Kent came together to lobby Kent County Council in Maidstone last Thursday.

The council is proposing to implement another £108 million of cuts with a loss of 400 jobs.

Cuts of £500 million have already been made and 2,000 jobs have been axed.

Protesters were angry that senior council managers were being paid salaries over £180,000 a year.

Campaign against Tory housing plans

ACTIVISTS FROM the Axe The Housing Act campaign are campaigning in Tory housing minister Gavin Barwell's constituency on 7 January.

They are hoping to draw attention to his role in implementing the hated Housing and Planning Act.

Barwell won the Croydon Central seat with a majority of just 165 votes in the 2015 general election.

He is in a vulnerable position and housing campaigners hope to exploit this as part of the growing movement to defeat the Act.

● Go to bit.ly/2gQZe5T

HIGHER EDUCATION



UCU UNION members on the picket line last week in Aberdeen

PICTURE: GORDON FERNIE

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

Tory job centre plan needs to be fought

by NICK CLARK

TORY PLANS to close half of all jobcentres in Glasgow are just the beginning of a massive attack on jobcentre workers and users, PCS union activists have warned.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) plans to close eight of Glasgow's 16 jobcentres. And with the Tories planning to shrink the DWP, hundreds more across Britain are sure to follow.

Dave Owens—a member of the PCS' DWP group executive—said the union had to fight back nationally. He told Socialist Worker,

"The closure programme is a threat to a vital service to the public. On that basis we should be looking at national action."

Dave added that Tory plans to slash the DWP estate by 20 percent—getting rid of offices—by 2020 mean there are bound to be more closures announced soon.

Strikes

Steve West, a group executive member in Scotland, said the threat of more closures was another reason for national strikes. "There has to be national strikes across the civil service—other departments such as HMRC have had closures too."

"At the very least there has to be national strikes across the DWP—not just in the offices affected, but the ones that aren't as well."

PCS DWP branches in Glasgow must ballot for strikes now.

But they cannot be left to fight alone. If branches are balloted and left to fight individually, offices where action is weaker could be picked off.

That's why it's also urgent that the PCS organises for national strikes as soon as possible.

● Workers spoke in a personal capacity. Article longer online at bit.ly/2gR1av6

OBITUARY

Ken Montague
1946-2016

KEN DIED after a short struggle with pancreatic cancer. His death—so quick and sudden—leaves many of us who knew him shocked by his loss.

Ken was an active member of the International Socialists and later the Socialist Workers Party. He was a member of the Nuffield union in Barnet College, where he taught media studies, and was secretary of Barnet trades council. Ken also worked closely with the Grunwick strike committee and played a big part in that very significant struggle in the 1970s.

Ken was special. He could undertake all those routine bureaucratic tasks but relate to those around him in a non bureaucratic way. He had an ability to listen, and to argue if he thought you wrong, in such a way that you could never fail to have absolute trust in him.

Ken was naturally unsectarian. Wherever he was



Ken Montague

active he built networks of people around him.

After his retirement, Ken threw himself into working with the Campaign Against Climate Change (CACC) and was a driving force behind its trade union work.

It was while doing one of his biggest projects, the 2012 Climate Caravan, that Ken's skills were revealed. He helped organise dozens of events as two vans drove around Britain for the One Million Climate Jobs campaign.

Ken was organising, speaking and making sure the immense logistical task came together. He was also a key

figure in helping to organise meetings to build a global network around climate jobs during recent protests in Paris, when global leaders held climate talks.

In the last months Ken had been part of bringing together an impressive line-up for a conference on "climate refugees" for the trade union movement in February.

He'll be enormously missed from CACC.

The other part of Ken's life was his book on the early labour movement.

His encyclopedic knowledge of this history and the personalities always left the impression that he knew them, almost personally. When he talked about it you felt it was not an academic exercise but part of his living experience.

We can only hope that it will be published soon, not just as a contribution to the debate about the roots of reformism but as a monument to his life as a revolutionary socialist, a fighter and a valued comrade, whom we will miss terribly.

Roger Cox and Martin Empson

Fight to defend jobs at University of Aberdeen

UCU UNION members at the University of Aberdeen struck on Wednesday of last week. They are fighting to defend jobs.

Bosses want to cut jobs in the school of medicine, medical science and nutrition. Some 15 workers are at risk of redundancy.

The union said four Asian workers had been told they could be made redundant or

accept new, worse contracts. It questioned whether this was discriminatory.

Over 100 staff and students joined the ten picket lines in a show of support for the union.

Further industrial action is planned as workers know that these are the first of many redundancies being scheduled.

Sadie Robinson

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Equality watchdog strikers fight against redundancies

CIVIL SERVICE workers at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in the PCS and Unite unions struck for the third time on Monday. They are fighting a 25 percent budget cut which will see 26 jobs slashed.

Bosses want to issue compulsory redundancy notices to 24 workers on 31 January. But 26 workers have already taken voluntary redundancy and there are 39 job vacancies.

PCS official Lois Austin said, "It was solid—nearly 100 percent turnout in London and Manchester. "Members are determined to fight to stop the compulsory redundancies."

Strikers protested outside the plush Carlton House terrace venue in central London on Monday evening, where EHRC bosses were holding a Human Rights Day Reception.

Austin said, "We think the redundancies are an absolute disgrace—it is the Equalities and Human Rights Commission after all.

"They have 24 staff at risk of redundancy. Of those, nine are BME, nine are trade union activists and 11 are disabled members of staff.

"So we think that there's a deliberate targeting of people that they want to get out of the commission."

She added that the PCS would keep taking industrial action to get the redundancies withdrawn if they are forced through.

CINEMA WORKERS



Picturehouse workers want more dough from the boss

Picturehouse revolt grows

RITZY CINEMA workers in Brixton, south London, were set to strike on Friday from 4pm as the new Star Wars film is released.

Bosses changed screening times during the last strikes to try to undermine the action but organisers said this had little effect on the strikes.

But it poses the question of escalation. An all-out strike at the time of big film releases would hit bosses' profits hard and undercut their ability to show films.

Bosses at Cineworld, the firm that owns the Picturehouse cinema chain, have refused to

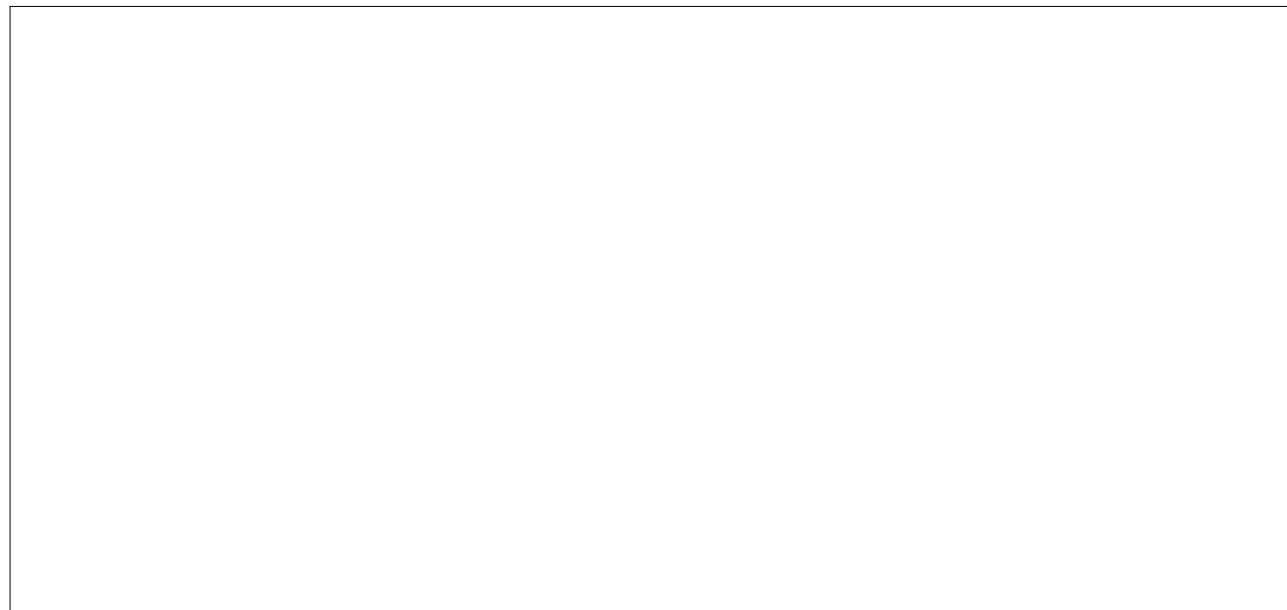
recognise the Bectu union at two other London Picturehouse sites where workers are getting organised—at Hackney in east London and Central.

They claim their phoney company union is enough for workers. But when they consulted about a new pay deal and workers rejected it, they went ahead and pushed it through anyway.

In a boost for the campaign for the London Living Wage and other pay-related demands, all three cinemas are joining a ballot for more industrial action.

Alistair Farrow

TEACHING ASSISTANTS



TEACHING ASSISTANTS on the picket line in October

Derby TAs call more strikes over pay cut

by RAYMIE KIERNAN

TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TAs) in Derby have called six days of strikes in their battle against a 25 percent pay cut.

The Labour-run city council imposed the cut in June.

The council's move to term time only contracts is part of an equal pay review that mirrors Labour-run Durham County Council's attack on TAs. It has cost Derby TAs up to £500 a month.

Unison union members were set to strike this Wednesday and Thursday, with further walkouts on Monday and

Tuesday of next week and then on 4 and 5 January.

The council offered to give 250 workers a £2,000 payment and the other 900 nothing. The strikes follow 90 percent of TAs voting to reject the offer.

The offer was the result of talks that Unison suspended a three-day strike for in early November.

The union said that "whatever the offer" it would ballot members even though it described it as "insulting, derisory and divisive".

The union should change its stance. Council chiefs must feel the pressure of industrial action while in future talks.

Calling off action and drawing it out over several months risks undermining the momentum of the campaign.

Unison said it has "discussed a further potential resolution" with the council of "compensation for the loss in weeks from moving to term time working".

But if it is not a permanent addition to TAs' wages—as it wasn't in Durham, where the vast majority of TAs rejected a similar proposal—then it should be rejected by the officials and action intensified.

Unison wants TAs "to be much stronger". The TAs should be able to rely on their union to follow suit.

RAIL WORKERS

VIRGIN WEST COAST

Catering workers fed up with chicken feed pay offer

VIRGIN WEST Coast catering workers were set to strike for 48 hours from 10pm on Tuesday and again on Tuesday of next week from 10pm in a dispute over pay.

The RMT union members are employed by DHL Global Group. It has the contract to supply pre-prepared food, crockery and cutlery for Virgin's on board catering from London to Glasgow.

DHL offered a 2.2 percent pay rise effective from 1 July, not the original anniversary date of 1 April.

They only offered it to staff who did not receive a rise in line with the National

Minimum Wage in April 2016.

The union said bosses were "trying to drag back the wages of the low paid to the absolute lowest of poverty thresholds".

Cleaners on Great Western Railways (GWR) were set to strike for 24 hours from 6am on Friday. They are in dispute with their Servest bosses over pay, annual leave and parity with GWR staff.

It stems from the transfer of GWR's cleaning contract from Mitie to Servest. Workers voted for strikes by 98 percent.

RMT UNION general secretary Mick Cash has slammed London Underground management for allowing London's tube stations to descend into chaos as a result of job cuts.

Station staff are currently carrying out an overtime ban.

The action is part of ongoing industrial action over the impact of the cuts.

"London's tube stations have been operating on the basis of our members' goodwill," said Cash.

"Now that our members are refusing to work six-day weeks and additional hours the system is collapsing."

London Underground bosses have given "Travel Ambassadors"

—non-operational staff—a fraction of the training that fully trained staff receive.

The idea is to use them to replace fully trained workers during industrial disputes.

These "ambassadors" are paid up to three times the rate for a shift that station staff would be paid.

Cash said, "London Underground management paid severance packages to around 900 experienced station supervisors and ticket clerks.

"Now they are offering unqualified admin staff and managers up to £250 a shift to avoid stations closing due to lack of staff.

"You just could not make it up."

LONDON UNDERGROUND

RMT members say, 'this station is non-operational'

FUJITSU

Electric strike campaign makes people join union

FUJITSU WORKERS in Manchester began three days of strikes last Saturday. They are fighting attacks on conditions and against the threat of 1,800 redundancies in Britain.

On Saturday strikers and their supporters leafleted outside high street shops that use Fujitsu IT services.

The Unite union members were demanding companies such as Boots, McDonalds, RBS and Santander contact Fujitsu and demand that they settle the dispute.

This round of strikes will bring the total number of strike days to nine.

The firm was forced to meet for arbitration talks at Acas on Friday, but it refused to concede any of the workers' demands.

One worker told Socialist Worker that the company showed "complete disregard" for the impact the redundancies, pension cuts and pay cuts will have on the lives of workers.

"All they seem to care about is money," said one worker.

Workers also told Socialist Worker that the threat of redundancies and Fujitsu closing the works council were encouraging people to join the union.

The strike has raised the profile of the union across all the firm's sites.

"We've been leafleting customers and picketing at different Fujitsu sites," said one worker. "This has led to over 100 people joining Unite in November alone."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Social workers get strike ballot at Kirklees council

THE UNISON union has agreed to ballot social work staff at Kirklees Council.

The ballot papers will be sent to members on 15 December and the ballot will close on 10 January.

The strike ballot will ask social work staff if they are prepared to strike in pursuit of their demands for smaller caseloads, a pay increase, an end to management bullying, an end to the use of agency workers and a travel plan.

Unison members have been requesting a ballot since March. Now the ballot has been agreed it is imperative that the vote for strike action is overwhelming.

The dispute has taken on a greater importance as Kirklees Council have called in Eleanor

Brazil to advise what Kirklees should do following an "inadequate" Ofsted report.

She's the architect of the Children's Trusts in Doncaster, Slough and Sandwell.

The council had initially agreed to pay £450,000 for the intervention of Brazil and her team.

Ironically, the report highlighted all the problems Unison members have been raising for the last few years.

It is essential to win this dispute in the fight to keep children's services at the council.

Send messages of support to Kirklees Unison, 4 New North Parade, Huddersfield, HD1 5JP. Telephone 01484511826

Nick Ruff, Unison branch Chair, (pc)

HOUSING CAMPAIGN

Protesters demand council houses homeless in Kent

SOME 30 people from the Medway Justice for Homeless People held a protest at the Dickens Festival in Rochester last Saturday.

The festival, held to commemorate the writer Charles Dickens, was organised by Medway council.

The council is not providing adequate help for the growing number of homeless people in the area and it recently evicted a small homeless encampment from council land.

The campaign was formed in the summer after a young homeless man was found dead in a tent in the centre of Chatham. It is demanding an end to evictions and the

opening of homeless shelters in empty buildings. Medway has the highest number of empty buildings in Kent.

The protest was well received by most people attending the festival but Tory councillors dressed up in top hats and fancy waistcoats were not so pleased.

The protest was followed by a public meeting where it was agreed that the campaign would identify empty properties that could be used as homeless shelters.

It was also agreed to put pressure on Labour councillors to fully support the demands of the campaign.

Steve Wilkins

Protests get rid of corrupt president

The South Korean parliament voted to impeach president Park Geun-hye last Friday after weeks of protests and strikes. But workers are not stopping there, writes **Workers' Solidarity**

AROUND ONE million people took to the streets of South Korea last Saturday to demand president Park Geun-hye resign immediately.

They defied calls from mainstream newspapers and MPs to stop protesting after the parliament voted for her impeachment on Friday.

One university student said, "Do not trust them saying that we should now stay home. We need to keep up the protests until Park admits her defeat and steps down."

Many also demanded that the prime minister, who automatically became acting president, should also resign.

They have raised doubts about whether the constitutional court, which has to ratify the impeachment, can be trusted.

Impeachment

A lot of people now feel that they have the power to change society after the impeachment motion passed in parliament with an overwhelming majority.

But there are also obvious reasons why they believe the fight isn't over yet.

Ministers appointed by Park are still in power and the prime minister is a notorious right wing figure.

The constitutional court is also a very conservative force. They supported Park when she denied legal trade union status for the teachers' union and when she forced the Unified Progressive Party—which had five MPs—to disband.

Park has also said she will find "every means possible" to overturn the impeachment.

In response the umbrella organisation leading the movement, Popular Action (PA), reaffirmed its demand for Park's "immediate resignation". It also demanded that all the ministers should resign.

But the opposition parties do not support the movement's demand to oust the



PROTESTERS LET off fireworks to celebrate the announcement of Park's impeachment (above). One placard showed what Park would look like behind bars (left). School students (below) are becoming radicalised by the movement



ministers and are instead devoting their efforts to beginning negotiations with the ruling party.

They now say protesters should leave the situation in the hands of politicians and the constitutional court. But these parties are preoccupied with winning the high ground for the upcoming presidential election next year.

NGOs are the most



Democratic Party so that they might stand a chance of participating in a future government.

Workers' Solidarity is Socialist Workers' sister publication in South Korea

As a result, Stalinists and NGOs constitute conservative forces within PA.

But their views don't represent the true feelings of protesters. Many have deep doubts about the opposition parties after experiencing years of political manoeuvres and betrayals.

Moreover, radicalisation is taking place among trade unionists and the youth. One of our PA stewards recently reported, "Every week, hundreds of people apply for a chance to deliver a speech at the protest. What's interesting is that most of them are trade unionists and youths."

Many trade unionists are eager to say that it was them who led the resistance against Park for years.

"Young people want to express their anger against social inequality and Park's cover-up of the Sewol ferry disaster when 250 high school students drowned."

Movement

The trade union movement and the campaign for Sewol Justice are the main forces behind the current mass movement. Many commentators who put infighting among the ruling class and the media's coverage of the scandal before the resistance movement are missing the social dynamics at work.

Left wing forces within PA—including us—are arguing that the movement should preserve its political independence from opposition parties and promote such radicalisation. PA has decided to continue hosting protests for every Saturday this month, with special emphasis on 31 December.

We are trying to seize opportunities to grow our roots within the working class, especially among youths and trade unionists.